

Chinese Policies in Sinkiang

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Merchants from Tientsin have flourished as far north as the city of Kulja in the Ili Valley. Nearly twenty years ago a British observer remarked that "successful merchants at Kulja come from the towns of Tou Liu and Yang Liu Ch'ing near Tientsin; the commerce of Ili has been kept in the families for generations, and considering the numbers of relations and connections every Chinese has, it is not to be wondered at that Tientsin people form a whole community, ranging from barbers to landowners, at Kulja."¹¹ 441.

Ever since Sinkiang became a province a small Chinese minority has ruled it by the indirect methods which many colonial governments have found effective. The traditional Uighur and Kazakh and Mongol feudal structures have been left more or less undisturbed, with the existing Begg and princes used as instruments of Chinese rule. In Sinkiang, just as in Sikang and the southernmost parts of Yunnan, the result of this indirect rule is an administration with a Chinese upper stratum and an indigenous lower stratum. The chief defect of this system is that instead of promoting political and administrative progress, it fortifies and preserves the feudal system, and hinders the evolution of a more modern form of society. 631 648

While bribery, corruption and venality are almost endemic in the lower stratum of administration, the quality of the upper administration is naturally subject to the policy of the governor or the chairman of the provincial government. At this top level Chinese policy has passed through three distinct stages. From 1884 to 1933 there was a period of about half a century dominated by an old-fashioned feudal bureaucracy. Governor Yang Tseng-hsin and Governor Chin Shu-jen can best be described as the last of the old imperial bureaucrats, though both served under the Chinese Republic. Then followed a decade of war lord rule from 1933 to 1944, under General Sheng Shih-ts'ai, whose policy was at first liberal and later harshly repressive. Finally, from 1944 until Sinkiang became enveloped by Chinese Communism on the east as well as Russian Communism on the west,

¹¹ *Journal of the Central Asian Society*, Jan. 1931, Vol. 18, pt. 1, p. 140.

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175

Otherwise it would be difficult to avoid internal conflicts and to ward off aggression from without.¹⁷

He was also fully aware of the underlying weakness of Chinese rule in this distant frontier province. In the same memorial he wrote:

It is a pity that what is called five races in one family [Chinese, Manchus, Mongols, Moslems, and Tibetans] has been only nominal and has not become a reality. Chinese officials, without a sense of moral obligation but full of ideas for selfish gain, are rarely talented in administration. There are too many bad officials and too few good ones. This is why there have been more days of trouble and fewer of tranquillity. This is true of all provinces, but it is worse on the frontier. It will be impossible for the Chinese officials to control the Moslems permanently unless administration is greatly improved.¹⁸

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In keeping with the ideas expressed in his own memorial, Yang Tseng-hsin made certain attempts to improve the economic situation in Sinkiang. As early as 1915 he put an end to the monopolization of the trade in silkworm eggs. In Yarkand, Khargalik, Guma Bazar, Khotan, Lob, and Keriya especially Chinese magistrates had been accustomed to import silkworm eggs from Russia and India. These they sold to the peasants, charging over three taels and sometimes as much as five taels for a case of eggs that cost one tael at most.¹⁹

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In 1916, Yang made an attempt to end the special form of *corvée*, known by the Manchu term *wula*, widely prevailing in such frontier provinces as Sikang, Szechuan, Chinghai, and Sinkiang, under which officials and travelers with official authority can requisition food, lodging, and transport. The requisitioning is done through local officials, and is a source of abuse because of the extra requisitioning which the officials exact on their own be-

¹⁷ Tseng Wen-wu, *op. cit.*, p. 599.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 595-596.

The Peoples of Sinkiang

151

In 1552 Kazan was conquered by the Moscow State, and from this time on the Tatars have been under Russian rule. In 1920 they received autonomous status and formed the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, in which they comprise the majority of the population. Considerable numbers of them live also in the Bashkir A.S.S.R. and in the Molotov, Gorki, and Saratov districts of the R.S.F.S.R., as well as in Sinkiang.

Before the revolution the main economy of the Tatars was based on agriculture, but many individual Tatars were active traders, especially as middlemen for Russian firms in Turkic speaking areas, such as Russian and Chinese Inner Asia.

Tatar is a Turkic language and belongs to the northwestern group of this language family. [197]

The Tatars are Sunni Mohammedans. They were converted to Islam in the tenth century. After the Russian conquest of the Volga region, attempts were made by Russian colonizers to convert them to Christianity by offering economic advantages to converts, but success was negligible.

The older Tatar literature represents a comparatively small body of primarily religious literature. In the second half of the nineteenth century a secular, rational, realistic, and increasingly nationalist trend made itself felt under the influence of Russian culture. In the twentieth century, Tatar literature — like Russian literature — has been strongly preoccupied with practical political questions, and the various literary schools have been political schools rather than aesthetic movements. Today the Tatars in the Soviet Union possess a flourishing literature, strongly influenced by Western forms. The complicated Arabic script which had been such a bar to the elimination of illiteracy was abandoned in favor of a Latinized script which, in the late thirties, was in turn replaced by a Cyrillic script.

1: Washington S-4 (no date) 1956 AF13 Northwest China AF13
Sinkiang A11
Kazak RQ2

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175 towards Russia, Turkey, and England. The cultural cohesion
631 created by Islam that connects Chinese Turkestan with Russian
668 Turkestan and other neighboring Muslim countries, and that
178 created by Buddhism that connects Mongolia with Tibet
619 through Chinghai and small areas of Sinkiang, marked the
648 four provinces of Sinkiang, Chinghai, Kansu, and to a small
degree, Shensi, as one single area which represents one
administrative unit.

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563 The Eastern Turks:

241 The main pattern of social life of the Eastern Turks is
based primarily on "Oasis Agriculture" with its irrigational
complex. All agriculture in this area is made possible through
the organized use of water. The family organization among the
Eastern Turks is therefore an extended one, since a certain
level of productivity can only be reached through collective
labor (upkeep of irrigational systems and dikes). One reason
the Eastern Turks developed the extended family pattern
[312] is that the family receives water in proportion to the amount
[241] of labor its members put into the upkeep of irrigational
systems and canals; the greater the family, the more water
is therefore provided for their land.

The Internal structure of the family system is not based
upon clan rules. Eastern Turkic communities are governed
[622] by a body of leaders, selected from the community itself.
[634] whereas the larger governmental districts are headed by
Chinese officials or, at present, by Chinese Communists.
563 A secondary aspect of Eastern Turkic social life is formed
by trade and handicrafts. Merchants and craftsmen form
[441] "guilds" which in turn influence the social life of the commun-
ity.

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563 Kirghiz and Kazakhs:

614 Kirghiz and Kazakh society is clan-based. (The definition
of the notion of "clan" is explained in the chapter about the
Social Structure.) All family relationships are deeply rooted
in the clan system. The main pattern of social life among
these two tribes is created by their nomadic way of life, whose
most essential economic activity is cattle breeding. The trans-
[233] migration to a semi-sedentary life is now under way. The Commun-
[361] ists insist that the Kirghiz and Kazakhs occupy a permanent
[177] winter camp site, since this facilitates better political
[668] control over the tribes. The choice of the summer camp site
still remains more or less in the hands of the tribes. Kirghiz
and Kazakhs are ruled by "baks," or "manaps" (elders)
responsible to the Chinese officials.

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563 The Mongols: general remarks.

[233] Mongol social life is based on nomadic pastoralism. The
[594] basic unit is the nuclear family. A group of patrilineally

[563] and their thin beards were black. They were of average height
[142] and no corpulent people were observed.

2. Economic activities

[233] The Sarigh-Uighurs are breeding horses, cows and sheep. Their
[556] economic position seems to be very poor. Even the richest man owns
[291] only a few horses and cows. They live in homesteads. Their clothing
is Chinese in style.

H. The Tatars

1. Economic activities

[167] Only a few thousand Tatars live in Sinkiang. They represent
a very distinctive Mongoloid type of Turk. Most of the Sinkiang
Tatars had fled from the former Kazan Khanate in the Volga
region after the Communist Revolution. Some, however, have
lived in Sinkiang since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
[463] Despite their small numbers the Tatars have had remarkable in-
[441] fluence as merchants and traders due to their high education.
[871] For a long time they have been the middlemen between the Russian
merchants and the Turkic tribes.

2. Religion and literature

[771] The Tatars are either Moslems or Christians. Their litera-
[538] ture is very well-developed and illiteracy is practically unknown.
[212] In Sinkiang they still use the Arabic script.

III. The Mongols of the Northwest

A. The Mongols of Sinkiang

1. General characteristics

[167] The Mongolian tribes of Sinkiang are all Oirats or Western
Mongols. Only the Chahar Mongols, who were transferred from
Inner Mongolia by the Manchus, are Eastern Mongols. A small
group, the so-called Uriangkhai, are considered to be Mongols,
but in reality they are Turks who have adopted Mongolian as their
new language.

a. tribes

[619] The Western Mongols (Oirats or Ölöts) of Sinkiang consist of
[197] two tribes: the Koshuts and the Torguts. They all speak a West-
ern Mongolian dialect, very similar to Kalmuck, formerly spoken
in the Kalmuck Socialist Republic.

b. religion and economy

[771] All Western Mongols are faithful Buddhists. They are said to
[233] be very uniform in their customs and habits. They are all pastoral
[342] nomads and breed horses, camels, sheep and yaks. They still live
[614] in collapsible tents. The clan system is well preserved.

2. Physical characteristics

[563] Employing Eickstedt's terminology, the Western Mongols repre-
[141] sent the Mongoloid race, and are one of its purest examples: the
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/The New Uighurs/

563 A small percentage of these landlords have invested their
565 wealth exclusively in irrigation projects since water constitutes the most profitable commodity.

563 3. The rest of the New Uighur population is subdivided into
565 the following social groupings: a. The clergy (Muezzin,
793 Iman, Mullah, etc.) constitutes a very important segment
[871] of the social structure. In its hands the education of the youth rested up to 1949, and it played an important role in shaping the character of the community. As the representatives of the mosque, they are not only the spiritual leaders of the community, but they are also the administrators of the land belonging to the mosque.

563 This land came into the possession of the mosque as be-
565 quests from pious Moslems. Thus, the mosque is not only a
795 spiritual, but also an economic, center. In addition, the
[423] mosque serves as a social welfare institution, in that it cares for all those persons of the community who are unable to make a living.

563 b. The merchants constitute the last segment of the
565 New Uighur class structure. After the Arab conquest of Inner
• 441 Asia, the merchants enlarged and promoted existing trade centers, thereby acquiring greater wealth and influence. It is noteworthy that most merchants in the Northwest are Moslems. In their hands rest not only most economic activities, but also the dissemination of Turkic and Arab culture. In the merchant ranks, the Chinese found willing and able officials who enjoyed the same privileges as did the Chinese administrators. However, in the Moslem uprisings, these officials aligned themselves with the Moslem population, and often assumed leadership in these movements of rebellion against the Chinese rulers. It may be presumed that to a large extent the Moslem uprisings in the Northwest were incited by the merchants.

563 Among the New Uighurs residence is bilocal. Dwellings
[591] are usually occupied by extended families who either form an economic unit, or work as individuals or a family group on the fields or irrigation projects of a wealthy landowner. Polygamy is practiced by the wealthier Moslems, especially the merchants
[595] of Sinkiang, who have wives at different trading centers and
[556] therefore become the masters of several family units. The children resulting from these marriages are all treated as
[851] equals. Inheritance follows the rules of primogeniture. In contrast to the nomadic peoples of Sinkiang, whose women occupy a relatively high and valuable position, the women of the
[428] sedentary peoples of the same area, the Turkic women, are held in low esteem. The Sinkiang nomad must buy his bride
[562]

/The New Uighurs/

563 The Sinkiang nomad must buy his bride
[184] with a bride-price, but the sedentary Sinkiang bride is given
[583] away by her father. In addition he even pays all wedding ex-
[584] penses. Marriages are arranged by a "go-between", who usu-
[586] ally occupies a higher social position than either the bride or
[589] groom's families. As in all Moslem communities, divorce is
a relative simple matter for the male. Therefore, a consid-
erable number of women without family attachments are present
in all Uighur communities. These unattached women are usu-
ally engaged in employment as tailors, cooks, or weavers, and
thereby form a distinct social unit. As a rule they are identi-
fied with the household of their employer.

563 In general, all Uighurs are individualistic in character.
621 However, the structure of the community with its irrigational
182 problems gives them a collectivist outlook on life in parts.
[181] The families that form such an Uighur community are by no
means bound together by kinship obligations. Their communal
cooperation rests exclusively on the fact that without collective
effort and labor the community would perish.

563 Prior to 1949, no organized youth groups existed in Uighur
[561] communities, since in any Islamic community the male child
begins to participate in the activities centered around the
mosque at a very early age. All other youth groups were dis-
courage[d]. The young Uighur man becomes a full member of
[585] the community at the time of his marriage. He will receive
[885] title to any land or water rights only upon the decease of the
eldest male member of his family. Until then both he and his
wife work as members of the extended family group. A young
merchant usually will act as his father's representative until
the father's retirement from business affairs or his death.

563 Merchants are bound together in "guilds". However, these
441 associations are not official institutions but were natural out-
growths of the merchants' self-protecting interests. Should
any member of the community be guilty of not paying his debts,
he will be prosecuted by the members of such a "guild", even
though he may have moved to another community. In each
locality or city, the merchant's "guild" is organized under the
leadership of an aqsaqal, who functions as a public official.

563 Individuals of the Uighur community who do not inherit any
166 land, move to non-irrigated areas which nevertheless show
241 possibilities of being irrigable. These new irrigation pro-
425 jects are usually undertaken as the collective effort of several
families who move as a group to such a new area. This prac-
tice may explain population increases in Uighur occupied
areas.

563 New industries and the further development of natural
198 resources may have some influence upon Uighur social struc-
ture, since these factors increase the wealth of both the